

Gratitude and Associated Demographic Determinants, Psychological Distress and Subjective Well-being a 7.5 Month Prospective Study

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Background

Gratitude refers to a “generalized tendency to recognize and respond with grateful emotion to the roles of other people’s benevolence in the positive experiences and outcomes that one obtains”^[1]. Gratitude has been associated positively with measures of life satisfaction^[2,3] and subjective well-being^[4], and negatively with depression^[5] and anxiety^[6]. Although these studies inspired the development of several positive intervention programs aimed at promoting well-being through the enhancement of gratitude^[7,8], further empirical support for such interventions, in the form of methodologically solid prospective inspections of gratitude and its relation to measures of well-being and ill-being, is currently scarce. In addition, as indicated by Parks and Biswas-Diener^[9], evaluation of population characteristics in relation to specific target variables is essential for developing effective and empirically sound interventions. The current study therefore aims to further examine the demographic components of gratitude, and prospective associations between gratitude and measures of subjective well-being and ill-being. Here we present our preliminary findings.

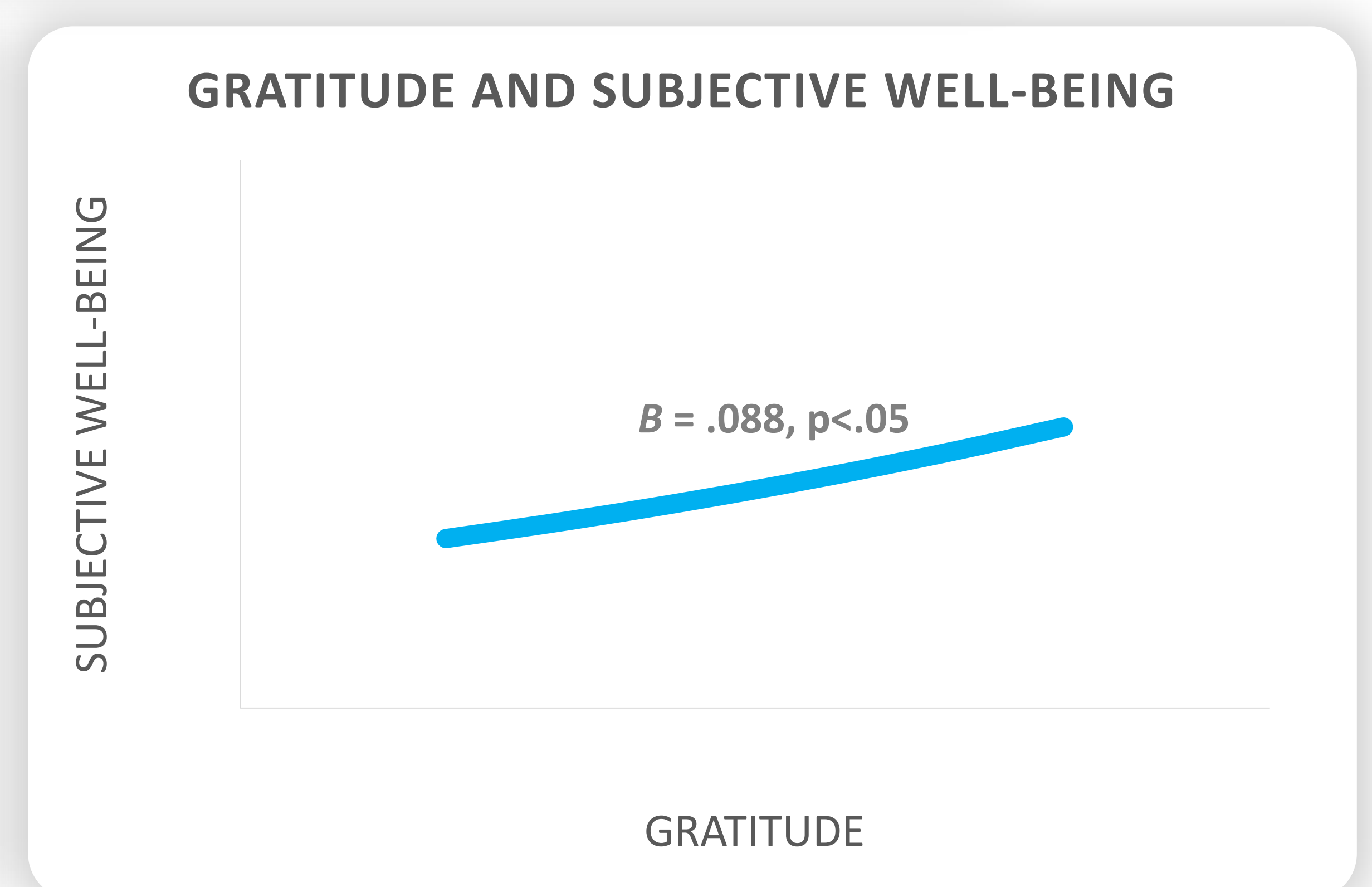
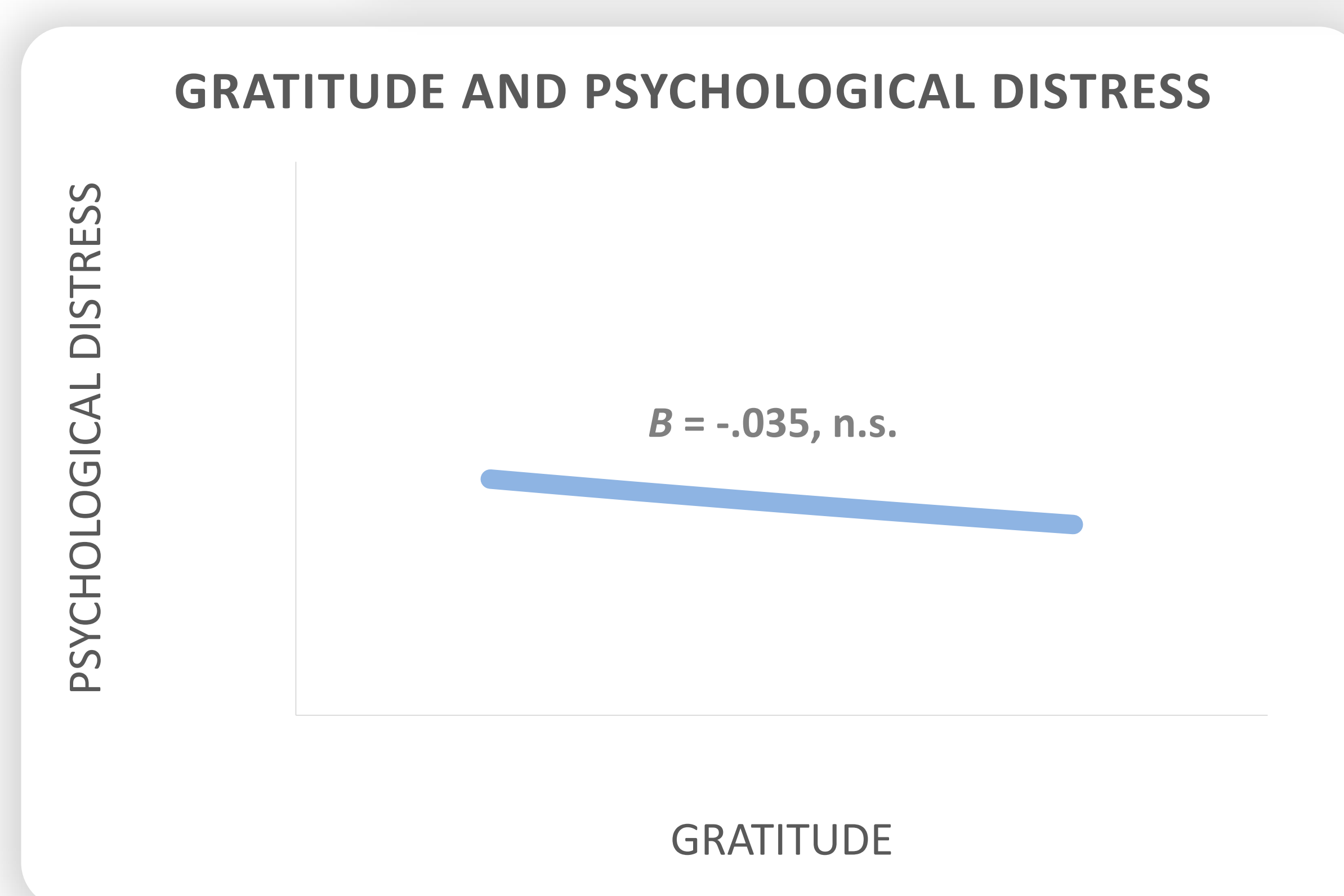
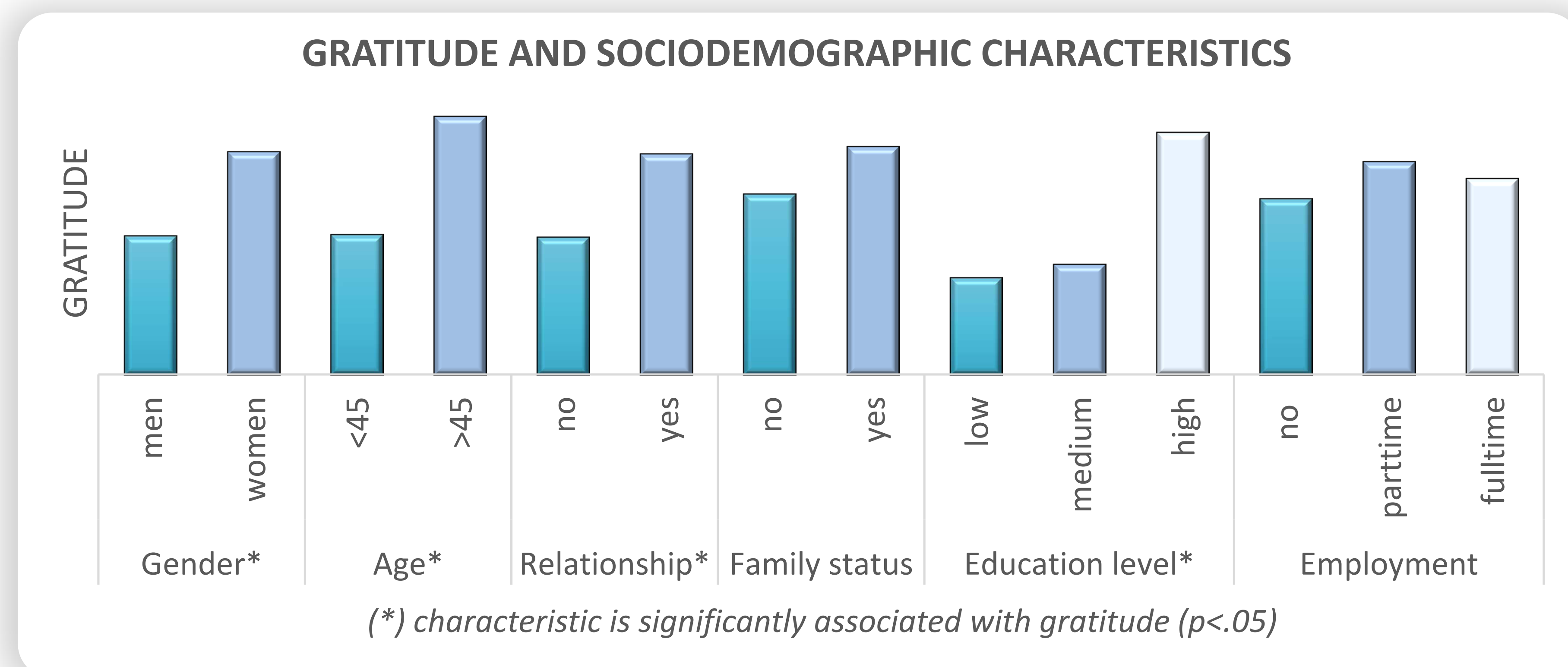
Hypothesis

We hypothesized that higher levels of gratitude would be longitudinally associated with lower levels of psychological distress and higher levels of subjective well-being, and that these associations would not be reducible to demographic factors or correlations in psychological distress and subjective well-being across time.

Methods

Using a four wave prospective survey design in a large (n = 706) general population sample of Dutch speaking adults (M_{age} = 44, SD_{age} = 14, Range = 18 – 80), among 220 men (31%), we measured gratitude with the SGRAT, psychological distress with the SCL-90, and subjective well-being with the PANAS and SWLS. Multilevel time-lagged regression analyses were conducted to test the two prospective hypotheses.

Results



Main conclusions

- Gratitude as a disposition showed significant associations with age, gender, relationship status and education level.
- The negative prospective effect of gratitude on psychological distress was reducible to correlations in psychological distress across time.
- The positive prospective effect of gratitude on subjective well-being remained significant, even when taking into account demographic factors at baseline, and prior levels of subjective well-being and psychological distress.

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